

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5014

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As of January 24, 2017

**Title:** An act relating to calculating the benchmark rate for certain community residential services.

**Brief Description:** Concerning determination of the benchmark rate in Snohomish county for certain community residential services.

**Sponsors:** Senators Pearson, Hobbs and Chase.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Health Care: 1/23/17.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Requires the rate at which direct care staff hours are paid in Snohomish County to be calculated using the King County classification.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE

**Staff:** Kathleen Buchli (786-7488)

**Background:** The Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA), within the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), offers instruction and support to persons with developmental disabilities who live in the community. Clients who receive supported living services are 18 years of age or older, and they have been assessed as needing supported living services to meet their health and welfare needs.

Support services may vary from a few hours per month up to 24 hours per day of one-on-one support. Clients pay their own rent, food, and other personal expenses, and the DDA contracts with private agencies to provide supported living services. Services provided may include:

- alternative living services;
- dental services;
- child development services;
- community access services;
- employment;

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- family services; and
- nursing and/or therapeutic services.

Rates for the supported living providers are determined for each individual client based upon the number of direct care staff hours needed to meet the client's assessed needs. Staff hours are paid at a pre-determined benchmark rate specific to county categories:

- Metropolitan Services Areas (MSA);
- Non-MSAs; and
- King County.

**Summary of Bill:** DSHS must use the King county classification when determining the direct care staff hourly rate for supported living providers, group homes, group training homes, and staffed residential homes in Snohomish county.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 18, 2017.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: Snohomish county is losing direct care providers to King county because of the pay differential between the two counties. This bill provides fair wages for employees who work in supported living. Most employees work multiple jobs to pay for their family. Agency employees can earn around \$11.05 an hour in Snohomish county; using the King county rates would increase wages by an extra \$0.62. There are overtime and staff shortage issues in Snohomish county because providers go to King county, often after being trained in Snohomish county. This would eliminate the benchmark disparity between these two counties. This is also a statewide issue. If they cannot hire staff, providers will go out of business; this leaves clients needing to find other providers. This should be modified to clarify that it applies to DDA clients only. The cost of living in Snohomish county is the same as in King county and the wages should reflect that. We need an 18% rate increase for the program to be financially solvent long-term; if the rates do not come up, agencies will have to close.

OTHER: We need to look at the impact on all providers. Providers are not being paid above minimum wage. A null and void amendment should be added.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Kirk Pearson, Prime Sponsor; Sue Closser, Sunrise Services, Inc.; Lee Phillips, Sunrise Services, Inc.; Michelle Dietz, Village Community Services.

OTHER: Scott Livengood, Community Residential Services Association.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** PRO: Alyssa Arley, citizen.